

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE BRIEFER: COLONEL WAYNE GRIGSBY, 3RD  
HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION, MULTINATIONAL DIVISION-CENTER  
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MR. HOLT: Okay, Colonel, welcome aboard. You're kind of breaking up  
there just a little bit, but I think we'll be fine.

COL. GRIGSBY: Okay.

MR. HOLT: There we go. That's better, okay.

And welcome to the Bloggers Roundtable. With us this morning is  
Colonel Wayne Grigsby. He's commander of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd  
Infantry Division out of Multinational Division-Center.

Thank you for being with us this morning, sir. Do you have an opening  
statement for us? COL. GRIGSBY: Sure. Yes, sir. Do you care for me to start  
off with that?

MR. HOLT: Yes. Why don't you?

COL. GRIGSBY: Okay. It'll take a couple of minutes, if that's okay.

MR. HOLT: That'll be fine.

COL. GRIGSBY: Okay, sir.

Well, good morning, and thanks, all you guys, for being there and what  
you're doing to get the story out. I'm glad you're interested. And the soldiers  
over here are performing in an outstanding manner. One of the main lessons we  
have learned, that I've learned as a brigade commander, is the importance and  
the primacy of the security line of operations, actually going out there and  
killing and/or capturing the extremists.

We have made amazing progress along all lines of operation, but it is  
security that opened all the doors to allow us to get it going. As a matter of  
fact, I just heard one of the leading sheikhs in - (inaudible) - say yesterday  
that because they have security in this area, the sectarian reconciliation can  
move forward.

I often tell my soldiers, "Remember what you and what your unit was  
made to do." And we're an entry brigade, and we're meant to go out and kill or  
capture extremists. That's what we do.

The fact is, we've had high-intensity conflict every day at the lowest level. We're improving our ability to fight in a high- intensity conflict each and every day. What I'm saying is that bodes very well for the future leader development of our Army, just because each individual combat patrol moves out every day and conducts actions on contact, return fire and seek cover.

Our mission statement in the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team is to conduct full-spectrum operations in coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces and Concerned Local Citizens to interdict extremists, to deny extremist elements from freedom of movement, from the - (inaudible) - into Baghdad, and prevent sectarian violence.

Bear in mind that we are responsible for an area about the size of Rhode Island, with a population of 1.2 million. We were the first coalition brigade to operate in this area. It was a (con air ?) force operation for a cavalry squadron before we arrived, maybe one or two companies. We had to build our forward operating base and six combat outposts of patrol bases from scratch, and we're working on our seventh, and, at the same time, fighting the enemy. Here are some of the ways these magnificent soldiers have gone after the security line of operation as part of full spectrum. Since April of '07, we at the brigade have conducted 166 named operations. These are just the operations that are at the company level and above. We've done many of them underneath at the combat patrol level.

About 30 of these were air assault operations. In other words, we would pick up an element with helicopters and attack helicopters, go into a location, and get out and kill or capture bad guys, and then get back on and move out. It could range from 20 to 50 kilometers away.

We searched over 13,000 vehicles and cleared over 3,300 buildings. These operations to date have resulted in about 149 extremists killed, 500 extremists captured, and 36 of those were high- value individuals or our HDIs; more about them later. And we have found 78 extremist weapons caches and 151 IEDs. Our current clear- and-find rate of IEDs is around 48 percent.

Through multiple intelligence sources, we found out that the extremists were using boats along the Tigris and Diyala Rivers as a route for trucking their weapons and that they were the only ones using boats at night. So you know what we did. We targeted boats and we destroyed up to 161 of these Little Jon boats that they used to bring ammunition and explosives back and forth to resupply themselves.

When we arrived here, there was a significant threat from indirect fire, so we started using what we call terrain denial fires. These are observed artillery, mortar, attack helicopter fires into known points of origin from which the extremists had launched their mortar or rocket fires.

We fired over 1,800 of these missions, and the results are amazing. We have seen a dramatic reduction in the extremists' ability to (indirect ?) fire (attacks ?). We explained to the people why we are doing these - (inaudible) - fires as well, and hopefully to get the sheikhs to the table.

And, of course, we don't measure our progress here just by the number of extremists we have killed or captured. That is just one of many ways we have measured our progress. When we arrived here, many people had fled the area, and the Madain Qada had a reputation as a brutal place that was unsafe to enter.

In 2006, the murder rate per month was an average of 53 per month. Now we see more and more families coming back to live here. The average for the last few months was about nine murders. We don't have kidnapping stats for '06, but in May we had a peak of 22. In November we had five. And now, in December, we had two. The Madain Qada is now - is safer than some other countries and some cities in the United States. We recognized from the beginning that we had to have good intelligence for our combat operations to succeed, intel-driven ops. To make our missions intel-driven, we've put a lot of effort towards using every source of intelligence available. We've developed processes toward focusing our intelligence efforts. One of these processes was the intel fusion meeting that we conduct via a collaborative tool - (inaudible) - about four times a week.

Every source of intelligence the brigade can leverage is brought into this virtual meeting. The Army helped us out when we reorganized the brigade combat team by making available to us an array of assets that just two years ago were not even available at the division level when I was a G-3 at 1st ID.

Having timely and accurate multiple cooperating sources has allowed us to search relatively small areas with a high degree of confidence that we will catch the individual we want to arrest. In fact, we have been catching so many of their extremist leaders that their second- and third-tier guys have been reluctant to step up and assume command.

Narwan, a city of about 100,000, lies just north of Forward Operating Base Hammer, which was solidly under Shi'a extremists when we arrived. Now, because we have grabbed so many of their battalion commanders, the Shi'a extremists there are completely disrupted.

One reason we know that they are disrupted is because of the willingness of the local - (inaudible) - now to work with us, whereas before they would not. And we also have a patrol base right in the center of Narwan as well.

One very significant factor that has helped us with developing intelligence at the street level, on the street, is the Concerned Local Citizens. In our area, the Concerned Local Citizens took root in Arafiyah in August. The main sheikh that was sponsoring the first Concerned Local Citizens, Sheikh Allawi, was attacked by an AQI suicide bomber during a meeting at the sheikh's house.

One of his sons tackled the bomber and was killed when the bomb went off, but he saved the lives of the group members and many of my soldiers. That event seemed to galvanize the resolve of the group, and within hours they were working with the predominantly Shi'a national police, who arrested the AQI cell that was responsible - Sunni and Shi'as working together.

From the Arafiyah area near Jejubayel (sp), the CLCs are still spread outward. The first move happened within two weeks of the sheikh son's death. It was called Taleka (sp) Sunrise. This very successful operation set a template for how Concerned Local Citizens, national police and our forces worked together in an operation as one team.

The CLC members knew the area, knew where all the IEDs, knew where the caches were and knew where the AQI safe houses were. They led the way, backed up by national police and the Hammer forces. Taleka (sp) was an area we could hardly move through previous to this operation, and we cleared it in two

operations that lasted about two days each. At each point we cleared the CLC set-up checkpoints and created a lasting presence so the bad guys could not come back.

The most recent place we applied this template was Operation Zelig Sunrise just to the north of Salman Pak, the second-oldest city in Iraq. This two-day operation resulted in finding 20 IEDs that the extremists had planted along the route and four small-arms agents that left 13 Sunni extremists, AQIs, dead. Zelig Sunrise was the fourth sunrise-type operation designed to isolate and clear Salman Pak.

Not only do the Concerned Local Citizens provide us with tremendous tactical intelligence and conduct clearing operations like Zelig Sunrise, but they also thicken the lines of Iraqi Security Forces. They set up checkpoints to hold an area once it's been cleared so the extremists can't come back.

A couple of points to emphasize about this operation and the CLCs and the Madain in general. While the CLCs are majority Sunni, they have worked with the largely Shi'a national police and local government from the beginning. Secondly, these CLCs work. The proof lies in the whole range of indicators, like the number of excellent tips we continue to receive that result in more caches and IEDs found and extremists arrested. Thirdly, while there is some inevitable tension with the (GUI ?) about tribal influence, in Madain, the local government has largely embraced the Concerned Local Citizens.

We have hosted two monthly - (inaudible) - here on Hammer that symbolized and fostered that spirit of cooperation. We invited some Iraqi journalists to these events, and both times they were amazed at what they were witnessing - sheikhs of both sects meeting together with local government and ISF with coalition forces, all working as one.

It has made a difference. Right now we're seeing a transformation of the city of Salman Pak. Until recently, Salman Pak was the epicenter of sectarian strife in the area and formerly one of the most dangerous places in the Madain Qada. Now we are seeing about five new shops a day opening, being added to the marketplaces, and an increase in luxury goods and items like washing machines, tricycles being sold. Those things being sold -- you can tell the economy is growing for nice-to-have things.

Salman Pak, was the seat of the Qada government until '05, when the AQI moved into the area and the rising violence forced the Qada government to relocate to another city and the court to move completely out of the Qada. Now that the security has changed so dramatically, the Qada government and court are both poised to move back. This is a big win. Security at the Nathan Point division (ph) is set in order to make any real progress along the other lines of operations and governance, economics, transition, rule of law and communications.

The other lines of operation certainly contribute to a security, but progress and security must come first. We recognize that there is much to do, but among those living here in Madain, we have noticed a clear sense of hope about the future because they feel safer. And it is an exciting time to be here. We have made tremendous gains and are going to be a lot -- and we are not going to allow the extremists to recover even though we do have a lot of work to do.

Okay, that's about it. I'll open it up to your questions.

MR. HOLT: All right -- excuse me. Thank you very much, sir. Jarred, you were first online. Why don't you get us started here?

Q Great.

Thank you, sir, for your time. It's Lieutenant Fishman.

In looking at the map of your area of operations, you're kind of stuck as a blocking force right between the outer belts of the Sunni extremists to your north and then the Shi'a extremists to the south. So perhaps you could talk a little bit about -- you have a -- kind of a two-front struggle and how you can see that progressing in the future to try to bring that -- both sides kind of together, I guess, as the majority of the population doesn't want to fight and would want to be working together. So how are you trying to bridge those gaps between the two?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, that's a great question and you're correct. In Hammer's battlespace, we have Sunni extremists which are south and southwest along the Tigris River, and then into the north and up towards Narwan we have Shi'a extremists. And oh, by the way, the things that rumble around here -- there will be some Persian influences rumbling around here.

The way we looked at is we had to interdict the accelerants from getting into Baghdad. We started what was closer to Baghdad. We started with Jajur Diyala and we started with Narwan. And in Narwan, what we did is we went out and killed or captured about five or six of the Shi'a extremist thugs in Narwan -- placed us -- patrols inside Narwan, working with the police and they were basically-- they -- all they want to do is jobs and work, to fight -- the coalition forces -- all they want to do is become part of the solution. (That's what -- (audio break) -- the Shi'a.

And the same thing is going Jajur Diyala (ph) as well, sir. And we have a patrol base -- patrol case -- patrol base cache just five minutes outside of Jajur Diyala (ph) with the joint security site in Jajur Diyala (ph) working with the National Police and the police. And then Lahaida (ph), which is another Shi'a sect stronghold -- we didn't have much problems in there from the south, there may have been some Sunni extremists initially that come up and started murdering them and dealing in direct fire. But most recently, they're now all pushing down. The problem we're dealing with right now is the Sunni extremists in the south.

And the way we solve it, frankly, is with the Concerned Local Citizens program because now when we go into a certain area, sir, the Concerned Local Citizens are there with us. That's the people of their neighborhood. You don't move Concerned Local Citizens all around and carry them around. They pop up in certain areas and then that's where you use them, and they secure their neighborhood. And thankfully we have people saying, "I'm tired of all the violence. I don't want this anymore. I want to work together for a better Iraq." And the Concerned Local Citizens has brought this together. As you can see, we have about 5,000-- about 5,800 Concerned Local Citizens, 50-50 split on Shi'a and Sunni, and some of these Concerned Local Citizens groups are both Shi'a and Sunni and working together.

So what we're seeing right now is it doesn't make a difference what (T-shirt ?) you're on. If you are threatening any people in the Madain Qada, we don't like you -- being the Concerned Local Citizens and being the coalition

forces. And we want to get rid of them. And it's -- what's forcing is -- it's forcing the Sunnis and the Shi'a to work together. Another example was just yesterday. I was invited over to a Sunni sheik's house for a goat crab. He also invited the Madain Qada mayor and the council, which is all Shi'a. And so -- and the Madain Qada -- you can see reconciliation is really working. And, frankly, I think it's working because the grass-roots involvement of the Concerned Local Citizens -- the people standing up and saying, "We don't want the violence anymore," and I think that -- I think that's the solution because you know as well as I do is the extremists count on the people to hide inside of -- that they can hide behind.

But now the people are standing up and saying, "Hey I'm tired of this." So now the extremists don't have anywhere to hide, so they have to leave the area and go find another place where they don't have all the security and because we don't have all those people -- coalition forces -- even with the surge, the Concerned Local Citizen now stood up and said, "Stop. You can't hide behind me anymore." I think that's part of the solution.

MR. HOLT: And -- okay.

Megan.

Q Hi. Thank for being with us today.

My question is regarding Muqtada al-Sadr and the Jaish al Madhi down in Najaf and Karbala. From what we're hearing, a report is that because he has ceased fire, that's why we're seeing a lot of the decrease in violence, particularly down south. And then the news reports as of two days ago said that he was not going to talk to the U.S. and was considering listing his ban. So what can you speak to as far as his involvement and what security would look like in the south?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, ma'am, all I can do is talk about where my area of operation is, and that's in the Madain Qada just outside of Baghdad. That's all -- I can't talk about the south and what's going on there because I don't fight in that area of operation. What I can tell you is in -- as being the 3rd Brigade in the surge and going into an area where we did not have a lot of coalition forces or ISF in there working together, that we came in there and kicked some butt -- to include some Shi'a extremist butt. And it just -- just seeing when he started the cease-fire after -- you know, that the surge was in and we started really taking it to the extremists. That's all I can state. And then we've heard different things -- that he's going to keep the cease-fire going or he's not. But we're going to focus on the Madain Qada -- just continue to help and provide security for both the Sunnis and Shi'as within the Madain Qada.

That's all I can tell you. I don't know what's happening down south and what's he's doing. But we've heard both as well.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Jarred.

Q Should we ask follow-ups?

MR. HOLT: Yeah, if you've got some.

Q Sure.

Okay, sir. Could you talk a little to that? Obviously on the ground, you're seeing all different types of neighborhoods and areas. What's been your feeling of the progress in the Iraqi Security Forces -- not just the CLCs, but the actual Iraqi Army and National Police?

COL. GRIGSBY: Great, great question.

I don't have any Iraqi Army in my area of operation, but I do have two National Police brigades that I work with -- I support in the system. I was in G3 of 1st Infantry Division back in ORF2 and what I can tell you is the National Police that I work with has been improved dramatically. They have great leaders -- brigade commander and battalion commanders that want to get it done. They're better trained, they're able to do some independent operations right now, they're very aggressive and they've embraced the assistance by the coalition forces. They also have embraced the assistance with the Concerned Local Citizens.

I meet with the two national police brigade commanders about on a weekly basis, and once a week I see their division commander that's part of the National Police. Very professional, all interested about making a peaceful place for the Iraqis within the Madain Qada. I think they've improved exponentially. It gives me a lot of hope -- put it that way.

MR. HOLT: All right.

Megan.

Q Sure.

One question in the Concerned Local Citizens. I know that the U.S. government -- we're paying for and sponsoring them right now. Has there been any talk of when they'll actually be formally brought into the Iraqi government, whether it's the security forces or the army or -- how that will look?

COL. GRISBY: Okay.

But again, what's happening in the Madain Qada is right now, we're working to transition some of the Concerned Local Citizens into the Iraqi Security Forces. As a matter of fact, as we bring them into Concerned Local Citizens, they take a certain amount of tests and et cetera so they will be accepted into the Iraqi police or the National Police. And currently we have about 507 packets in for the some of the Concerned Local Citizens that will be able to go to school here shortly to join the Iraqi police. And as well, we're starting to set up different civilian public works battalions that also will be able to allow some of the Concerned Local Citizens to keep jobs and transition to these public works battalions by allowing them to continue to work and make money for their family.

But there is a plan to bring a certain amount of the CLCs into the Iraqi Security Forces and we're working that within the Madain Qada. MR. HOLT: All right. Anyone else?

Q I've got some follow-ups then.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Sure.

Q Sir, could you talk a little bit about obviously the second part of the stool is the financial or the economic infrastructure help. So what's the system on the ground as far as getting the Iraqi national authorities in Baghdad to get out there and to organize these battalions that you're talking about from the CLCs or the work battalions -- getting them the right types of equipment and supporting them so that it puts more of the focus of the national government rebuilding the facilities?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, that's a great question. In just -- in a couple days the Madain Qada mayor with the help -- the support and assist of the Third Brigade on the economic line of operation is going in to brief the governor on their -- on their projects they want to get accomplished for the next fiscal year. So that dialogue is going on. I'm personally speaking with the governor on Sunday about that as well but in the Madain Qada we have a functioning government. We have a mayor and his council and four nahiyas that have their councils that feed into the mayor and his council.

So it is organized. They have been talking to the governor. The piece that we -- the sticking piece out here was security, and over the last 10 or 11 months as you can see we've taken it to them and the security has improved exponentially. So very quickly, we will see money and ministers starting to flow out in here to help us with -- for example we have a brick factory in the Madain Qada. The issue with the brick factory was both power and black oil. We most recently got the solution for the black oil and we're in process of working with the department of energy or power to fix the power piece out in the brick factory. This will hire about 6,000 more -- (audio break).

MR. HOLT: And Colonel? I think we just lost Colonel Grigsby. Okay. Jarred, you still with us?

Q Yes, sir.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Not sure what happened there. It -- evidently lost the connection with Colonel Grigsby. We'll give it just a few minutes here and see if he comes back on, and if we -- if not then in the meantime what we'll do is -- if you got follow-up questions you can e-mail them to me and I will forward them on, and -- all right. Well, guessing that we've lost the connection with Colonel Grigsby and we're just -- well, we've got a few more minutes here left on the schedule -- and this is Jack.

COL. GRIGSBY: Hey, sir, I'm back. MR. HOLT: Okay. All right. There we go.

COL. GRIGSBY: I'm sorry. We got cut off.

MR. HOLT: Not a problem -- not a problem, sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: Did I finish answering the question?

MR. HOLT: Well, we got to the employment of the brick factory at about 6,000 and that's where we lost you.

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah. So we are -- so as far as the economic line of operation, again, security was the primary, but what we've been doing the entire



time is we've been working on all lines of operation because you know by getting jobs in a brick factory that applies pressure to the extremists. By having a self-functioning government in the Mada'in Qada and those guys having meetings and developing a budget applies pressure to the extremists. So as far -- the security has gotten a lot better. I see the economics and governance just taking off, and if we can get the Baghdad governor and the Baghdad government to understand that security is better out here that they can start using GOI money to come out and build these projects and make the Mada'in Qada better and we just continue to support and assist. And I think it's got a bright future here in the next four or five months.

Q And just to follow-up on this, sir, is there a background or a backdrop enough of required requisite skills for the management of the Iraqi side? Like you said, I mean, it takes some kind of knowledge to build up a brick factory or to run it, and the -- those managers and either --

COL. GRIGSBY: Right.

Q -- many were killed or fled. Are some of them coming back or are feeling now --

COL. GRIGSBY: Yes.

Q -- that they can come back out into the open?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, you know, I'm not a -- you know -- well, you know I'm an army colonel so I'm not an expert on that, but when I go up to the brick factory, for instance, there is the subject matter experts up there that have talked to us, talked to my civil affairs teams and talked to the -- the Baghdad ministers that have come out and talked to them that are -- that can run the brick factory -- just they need these certain things that'll offer jobs for them to make them available. We're also sending Concerned Local Citizens to different vocational techs -- one across the river in Baghdad and one down in Askandra. We're sending concerned local citizens to those vo techs to give them skills so they can come back and get jobs. So we're working that on all levels to keep this thing going, especially while we got this window of security.

Q Are the vocational schools -- is that Iraqi led and financed?

COL. GRIGSBY: That's Iraqi.

Q That is --

COL. GRIGSBY: That's correct. That is Iraqi. That is correct.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And Meghan (sp), do you have anything else? Q No, sir. I don't.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Well, Jared, anything else?

Q Sir, when is your unit going to be finishing its deployment?

COL. GRIGSBY: Sir, I think -- right now I think we'll be finished in the middle of May, and there is a -- there's another outfit that's going to take my place. Matter of fact, my brigade's the only brigade that's getting -- the only surge brigade that's getting refilled and that's good news because they -- people have realized just how important the Madain Qada is. They've already

been out here, done a recon. We're tied back to them so we're going to try to set them up for a complete success which in turn sets up the Qada for success.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Excellent. Colonel Wayne Grigsby is with us for the Bloggers Roundtable today. Colonel, do you have any closing thoughts for us?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, the only closing thoughts I would make is that, you know, you see an 18- or 19-year-old kid in uniform just go up and hug him and kiss him and shake his hand because these 18-, 19- and 20-year old kids that are over here doing it every day. As I sit here there's somebody out there putting their life in harm's way for the security of Iraq and also for the future security of our country. And these kids are incredible. We are so -- our Army is so good that it's just -- it's scary. I've been in the Army for 24 years. I've never seen a better army that's just going after their -- going after it and doing it, and these young kids will soon be our junior leaders and then our senior leaders of our Army in the future, and they're just phenomenal. Then, of course, all my sympathies and condolences go to the family members of people that have lost soldiers over here, especially in the brigade of how many we've lost and the wounded, and just -- my heart just goes out to them for the sacrifice that they've made for the security of their country.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, thank you very much, and hopefully we can speak again before you all rotate out. Appreciate you being with us for the Bloggers Roundtable today, sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: No problem, sir. And thank you guys for what you do. We really appreciate it.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: All right. Take care.

END.